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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, December 22, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A Duck Dinner for Christmas." Information including menu and recipes, from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

In the good old days preparations for the holiday feast used to begin months ahead of time, as early as the first cold snap in the fall, in fact. I remember hearing my grandmother tell about preparations in her home when she was a child. Her mother used to make gallons and gallons of mincemeat, quantities of fruit cake, puddings and even pies long before the holiday season arrived. And then there was pumpkin to be cooked and put up for pies, and the prize turkey, duck or goose--- or more likely several of them--- to be fattened. The dinner was the big event on Christmas and required lots of work both early and late for the women in the household. A successful dinner meant a table laden with rich food of many kinds in great quantities. Oh, yes, feasts were feasts in the old days and people expected to eat too much on such festive occasions and be uncomfortable afterwards.

In my opinion we housewives today are much better off than our grand mothers and great-grandmother when it comes to this matter of Christmas dinner. For one thing, we escape much of the drudgery of preparing the meal. Many jobs are done for us. We no longer have to fatten our Christmas bird, can our pumpkin for pie or even make our own mincemeat unless we want to. We can depend on buying some foods at moderate cost already prepared for us. And what we do want to make at home can be done with much less time and labor because our kitchens are more convenient and our equipment more efficient.

But perhaps the most fortunate change of all is the change in ideas and habits of eating. The days when it was fashionable to over-eat have gone forever, let's hope. Today we believe in comfortable meals instead of the proverbial table groaning with food. Those old-fashioned eating contests when people were expected to put away several kinds of meat, rich gravies, hot breads, and for dessert rich pastries, puddings, cakes, and what not---well, is it any wonder that everyone felt heavy and stuffy on Christmas afternoon, that the man of the house felt cross the next day and that the children were irritable and upset?

The right kind of dinner, I think, is one that makes everybody happy before, during and after eating. It looks delicious. It tastes delicious. There is plenty, but not too much of it. Instead of spending time making huge amounts, the modern housewife gives special thought to perfection in

preparation and cooking and to serving each dish so attractively that the very thought of tasting it will be a pleasure. In place of all those heavy, often indigestible foods once used, we believe in substituting fruits and vegetables to whet our appetites and provide us with vitamins, minerals and other much-needed food elements. And fruits and vegetables, because of their color and attractive appearance, are such a help in giving the meal that delicious look I have been talking about.

I am about to give you the Christmas dinner menu I promised on Friday. And let me say now that this is to be a comfortable meal planned by the Menu Specialist with the greatest care. First, I will give you the menu and then you shall have some of the Recipe Lady's choicest recipes, which, she hopes, will add to the merry Christmas of all her friends all over the country.

All right, Pencils ready for the menu?

Grapefruit cocktail in the half shell; or Clear soup; Roast duck with raisin stuffing; Scalloped apples and sweet potatoes; Buttered onions; Peas, either new or canned; Celery hearts; Currant jelly; Hot rolls; Christmas salad; Mince pie, or Red Apple Compote with fruit cake; Coffee and, of course, Milk for the children.

Perhaps I'd better read that again. (Repeat)

That first course of fruit cocktail or soup is optional. You can take it or not as you please. At an informal family dinner, there is no reason why you should not start right in with the main course and serve that duck, which all the family is holding its breath for, at once. By omitting the first course, you save on the number of dishes to be washed. However, the Menu Specialist suggests that it does make the meal seem more festive and serves as an appetizer as well. She always chooses light, dainty, attractive starters for special dinners like this, instead of any thing rich or fat, because she wants to help stimulate the appetite.

Grapefruit cocktail is made by cutting the fruit in half and scooping out the contents. Then fill the shells with a mixture of diced fruit chilled. You may use the grapefruit which was taken out, if it has been separated from the white membrane. Add canned pineapple, diced bananas and sliced red and green maraschino cherries to give the Christmas color.

Now about the duck. A nine-pound bird will be about right for serving six people. If it is cleaned and stuffed the day before and the stuffing made, it will take only a few minutes on Christmas morning to stuff and sew it up ready for the oven. To make the raisin stuffing, just add a cup of seedless raisins to your favorite stuffing recipe.

If you have never tried sweet potatoes and apples scalloped together, you are in for a treat. This is one of the Recipe Lady's favorite dishes, and it is an economical one too. There are five ingredients:

- 3 medium-sized sweet potatoes
- 4 medium-sized apples, pared and cored
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons butter or other fat

I'll read those over again. (Repeat)

Cook the sweet potatoes in boiling water until tender, cool and skin them. Cut the potatoes and apples into slices, place in alternate layers in a greased baking dish, sprinkle each layer with sugar and salt, dot with fat, add a little water, and bake for 30 to 45 minutes, or until the apples are soft and the top layer is brown. Serve in the baking dish.

When the Christmas salad comes on the table with its bright red and green, the children are sure to be delighted. It is a tomato jelly salad, and may be prepared a day or two before Christmas and kept ready in the refrigerator. The mayonnaise may also be prepared in advance. There are ten ingredients in Christmas Salad:

3 tablespoons of gelatin	1/2 cup of cold water
1 quart of canned tomatoes	1 tablespoon of chopped green pepper
2 or 3 slices of onion	2 tablespoons chopped celery
1 and 1/2 teaspoons of salt	1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 teaspoon of sugar	1 cup of shredded cabbage

I will repeat that list. (Repeat)

Soak the gelatin in the cold water for 5 minutes. Boil the tomatoes and onion for five minutes, strain them through a fine sieve, pour the hot tomato juice over the softened gelatin, and stir until it is dissolved. Add the salt and sugar and chill. When the gelatin mixture is partly set, add the vegetables chopped fine, and mix well. Add more salt if needed. If the mixture is not tart enough, add a little lemon juice or vinegar. Pour into wet custard cups and place in a cold place until set, turn out on crisp lettuce leaves and garnish with thin rings of sweet red and green pepper. Serve with mayonnaise.

Red apple compote is a fine ending to a Christmas meal, unless the men in the family demand mince pie from long tradition. It is made by simmering whole peeled and cored apples on the top of the stove in syrup which has been colored by adding fruit coloring or those red cinnamon drops.

Here is the recipe with the five ingredients coming first:

6 tart apples
2 cups sugar
2 cups water
1/8 teaspoon salt
Red coloring or cinnamon drops

Pare and core firm, tart apples that will hold their shape when cooked. In a pan large enough to hold all the apples, make a syrup of the sugar and water and add the red coloring or red cinnamon candies. Put in the apples, cover and simmer them until they feel tender when pierced with a straw. Drain and place at once on plates for serving. Fill the centers with chopped raisins and nuts or tart jelly, and on top add a spoonful of hard sauce, grated cocoanut or chopped nuts. The apples may also be served cold with whipped cream.

I hope you will enjoy your Christmas dinner. Tomorrow I'm going to talk about low-cost holiday foods.

